

March 29, 2019

STD AWARENESS MONTH *TALK, TEST, TREAT*



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Naples, Fla. — April is STD Awareness Month, and the Florida Department of Health in Collier County (DOH-Collier) is reminding residents and visitors the importance of STD prevention, testing, and treatment.

STDs are very common. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), STDs are at an all-time high in the United States. There are an estimated 20 million new STD infections every year and half of all new STD infections in the US are among young men and women aged 15 to 24. All STDs are preventable and treatable, and most are curable. DOH-Collier is urging residents and visitors to take these three small actions to protect the health of themselves and their partners from STDs: *Talk, Test, and Treat*.

Talk. While it can be difficult, talking openly and honestly with sexual partners before having sex is important and can minimize the negative and sometimes lifelong consequences of STDs. Talking with a healthcare provider about STD testing and sexual history is also a critical conversation that is worth having.

Test. Many STDs have no symptoms. Getting tested is the only way for individuals to know their STD status in order to stop transmission and get proper treatment. For sexually active individuals, getting tested is one of the most important things they can do to protect their health. DOH-Collier is offering **FREE** Rapid STD Screenings with same day results on April 17th and April 18th at our Naples site. Call (239) 252-8593 for more information regarding these testing dates.

Treat. Untreated STDs can have serious health problems including fertility, pregnancy complications, and an increased risk in HIV infection. All STDs are treatable, and most are curable, so working with a healthcare provider to get correct treatment is crucial.

In addition to *Talk, Test, Treat*, DOH-Collier recommends the following to reduce the risk of catching or spreading STDs:

- **Abstinence.** Not having sex is the surest way to avoid STDs.
- **Condoms.** Using condoms correctly and consistently every time during sex is a highly effective way to reduce the risk of STD transmission.
- **Vaccination.** Human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most common STD in the US and can be prevented with a safe and effective vaccine. The HPV vaccine protects against many types of cancers and health-related problems, such as genital warts. Routine HPV vaccination is recommended for boys and girls ages 11 to 12. Hepatitis A and B are also vaccine-preventable. All infants are recommended to be vaccinated for hepatitis B, and

all children between ages 12 and 23 months are recommended to be vaccinated for hepatitis A. If this was not done, all people seeking protection against hepatitis A and B should get the vaccine.

- **Mutual Monogamy.** Mutual monogamy is agreeing to being sexually active with only one person. STDs can be avoided by being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.

DOH-Collier offers STD services at our Naples and Immokalee sites. For more information please call 239-252-8207 (Naples), 239-252-7300 (Immokalee) or visit <http://collier.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/infectious-disease-services/std/index.html>.

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